Flavius Merobaudes

(fl. 5th Century)

BRIEFING

Flavius Merobaudes was a 5th-century Latin rhetorician and poet.

BIOGRAPHY

Summary

Merobaudes was a Roman of Frankish origin who was raised in Spain, and likely was a descendant of the famous general of the same name who flourished during the fourth century.

He was the official laureate of Valentinian III and Aetius. Until the beginning of the 19th century he was known only from the notice of him in the *Chronicle* (year 443) of his contemporary Hydatius, where he is praised as a poet and orator, and mention is made of statues set up in his honour. He was part of Aetius army that campaigned in the Alps.

Praise

In 1813 the base of a statue was discovered at Rome, with a long inscription belonging to the year 435 (CIL vi. 1724) upon Flavius Merobaudes, celebrating his merits as warrior and poet. Ten years later, B. G. Niebuhr discovered some Latin verses on a palimpsest in the monastery of St Gall, the authorship of which was traced to Merobaudes, owing to the great similarity of the language in the prose preface to that of the inscription.

WORKS

Formerly the only piece known under the name of Merobaudes was a short poem (30 hexameters) *De Christo*, attributed to him by one manuscript, to Claudian by another; but Ebert is inclined to dispute the claim of Merobaudes to be considered either the author of the *De Christo* or a Christian.

***A Posteriri* editions**

The Panegyric and minor poems have been edited by Niebuhr (1824); by Immanuel Bekker in the Bonn Corpus scriptorum hist. (1836); the *De Christo* in T. Birt's *Claudian* (1892), where the authorship of Merobaudes is upheld; most recently F. Bücheler and A. Riese, *Anthologia latina sive poesis latinae supplementum* (2nd ed. of vol. 1, Leipzig, 1894–1926) 1, 2: pp. 327–328, no. 878. See also A. Ebert, *Geschichte der Literatur des Mittelalters im Abendlande* (1889). English translation by F.M. Clover, "Flavius Merobaudes: A Translation and Historical Commentary", *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, New Series, Vol. 61, No. 1 (January, 1971), pp. 1–78

DE CHRISTO

by Flavius Merobaudes

Proles vera dei cunctisque antiquior annis,
nunc genitus, qui semper eras, lucisque repertor
ante tuam matrisque parens; quem misit ab astris
aequaevus genitor verbique in semina fusum

virgineos habitare sinus et corporis arti
iussit inire vias parvaque in sede morari,
quem sedes non ulla capit; qui lumine primo
vidisti quicquid mundo nascente crearas,
ipse opifex, opus ipse tui, dignatus iniquas

aetatis sentire vices et corporis huius
dissimiles perferre modos hominemque subire,
ut possis monstrare deum, ne lubricus error
et decepta diu varii sollertia mundi
pectora tam multis sineret mortalia saeclis

auctorem nescire suum; te conscia partus
mater et attoniti pecudum sensere timores,
te nova sollicito lustrantes sidera visu
in caelo videre prius lumenque secuti
invenere magi; tu noxia pectora solvis

elapsasque animas in corpora functa reducis
et vitam remeare iubes; tu lege recepti
muneris ad manes penetras mortisque latebras
immortalis adis: nasci tibi non fuit uni
principium finisque mori, sed nocte refusa

in caelum patremque redis rursusque perenni
ordine purgatis adimis contagia terris;
tu solus patrisque comes, tu spiritus insons
et toties unus triplicique in nomine simplex:
quid nisi pro cunctis, aliud quis credere possit

te potuisse mori, poteras qui reddere vitam?